

Ramona Town Center Workshop - October 5, 1004

Some 30 Ramona residents met at the Senior Center on October 5 to take the next steps toward determining the future look and feel of their downtown area. The occasion was the third in a series of Village Design Workshops that began in the summer of 2003. The first two workshops established a vision for the town center, along with a number of specific recommendations as to how to fashion the vision. Capital improvement projects were also suggested.

In mid-September over 25 local organizations were formally invited to name a representative to serve on the Ramona Village Advisory Council. Attendees at the earlier workshops and the public were also invited to the October 5 meeting. It was designed to let the community work with more technical land use tools to begin implementation of the ideas from the earlier workshops. The focus was to refine the proposed land use regulations and the circulation network in the town center. Some key recommendations that were up for discussion were; fostering a mix of uses in the town center, developing a "mini-bypass" along B and D Streets and creating pocket parks.

There were a half-dozen County planners from the Department of Planning and Land Use on hand to assist in the process. At least six members of the Ramona Community Planning Group were present, as well.

After introductory remarks by Dahvia Locke, County Planner, and Bryan Woods, Ramona businessman and Planning Commission member, the attendees split into groups to work on different aspects of the earlier recommendations. Topics for the sub-groups were; Mixed Use development, Housing, Circulation, Pocket Parks and Industrial Land. Each team was given materials and maps to assist them. In some cases they were presented with three alternative designs to facilitate discussion.

After about an hour of work, each of the sub-groups made a short presentation. Among the suggestions was the establishment of three commercial zones along Main Street. An expansion of Old Town was proposed, with mixed-use development including senior housing. One or more parking garages were envisioned. It was suggested that the westernmost part of downtown be designed to accommodate parks, cafes and other attractive developments, eliminating less pleasant activities such as car lots.

It was suggested that new light industrial activities be placed along Pine Street (SH78) north as far as Cedar Street. To protect nearby residents and minimize visual impacts, all such developments would be shielded from view by wide, landscaped "berms." There was some discussion of the need to provide an appropriate place for business activities such as recreational vehicle repair and storage that must be outside.

As always, in the area of traffic circulation, the pressing need for a South Bypass to allow Country Estates motorists to avoid downtown was the primary concern. It was pointed out that good progress is being made with the design for the western part of the bypass, and that some right-of-way has been purchased. It was suggested that the mini-bypass proposed for downtown be extended much further west than originally proposed. The proposal for medians on Main Street was recommended, too.

All of the suggestions from the workshop will be correlated and formalized by County staff and will be brought back to the Advisory Council at a public follow-up meeting here on October 20. That meeting will begin at 7:00pm to allow more citizens to attend.

A major end product of the Village Revitalization work will be a set of Ramona-specific zoning regulations. This will ensure that downtown Ramona will be developed as its citizens want it to be, rather than under the County's blanket - "one size fits all" - zoning code. As Bryan Woods pointed out in his opening remarks, Fallbrook has recently completed such a process. He suggested that if interested Ramonans wished to take a tour there to see the results, he would arrange it.